

# Devotional Studies

## How Did the Disciples of Jesus Face Disaster?

How does one react to cancer? How does one react to financial difficulties? How does one react to a broken home? How does one react to death in the family? Many believers react in one of two ways: (1) one crumples before the disaster, or (2) one accepts the inevitable in a stoic way, that is to say, with almost inhuman fortitude. Neither of these reactions should be the response of the believer. One should turn his or her attention to the Apostles and to other disciples of Jesus in the first century in order to understand how they reacted to tragedy in their lives. Jesus is the answer to the heartbreaks of His people. The above questions are set forth in order to lay down the mindset of the early disciples as they faced the initial disaster of the Crucifixion of Jesus. Just a brief reflection upon His disciples' reaction before and after the Resurrection sets the stage for disciples of Jesus today. When one goes back almost two thousand years to the city of Jerusalem, one observes the sheer catastrophe of the crucifixion and the broken and discredited men and women who were followers of the Messiah. Yet, after the Resurrection of Jesus, one beholds men and women suddenly transformed into radiant, steady, and confident disciples of the Lord Jesus—no longer cowards.

The early disciples suddenly discovered themselves living in a new world—a world of joy, which joy experienced forgiveness of sins in and through Jesus. Fifty days after Christ's Resurrection, three thousand responded to the Good News of Salvation. About thirty years after Paul's acceptance of Christ as God's Way of salvation, he exclaimed: "He forgave us all our sins" ([Colossians 2:13](#)). To the Ephesians, he could write: "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins" ([Ephesians 1:7](#)). Even though the Romans wielded the hammer, nevertheless, it was, in actuality, Christ who wielded the hammer; He, himself, nailed the shame and sin to the Tree. He conquered sin and death. Paul captures the very heart and meaning of Christ's crucifixion with the following words: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?" ([Romans 8:35](#)).

Remember, Jesus was a conqueror! It is in Jesus that individuals overcome tragedy in their lives. Again, listen to the words of Paul as he seeks to drive home the motivating power in his ministry, which power should also be the power of every believer:

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

<sup>38</sup> For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons,<sup>d</sup> neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, <sup>39</sup> neither height

nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (**Romans 8:37-39**)

How do individuals hear the preaching of the Gospel—Jesus died, He was buried, and He was Resurrected from the dead. Yes, God brought the Christian community, or church, into being in order to tell this wonderful story of His death that could not hold Jesus in the grave and that He is still lives. It was this conviction that enabled the disciples of Jesus to endure all kinds of trials and tribulations. As one reflects upon the early church, they were not looking back to Jesus as the greatest of the sons of Adam, but rather, they looked to Him as the Second Adam—the living Lord of a new creation. Their message centered on the Resurrection of Jesus. Paul’s ministry and suffering was based upon the Resurrection. If the Resurrection did not occur, then there is the utter futility of it all: “And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith” (**1 Corinthians 15:14**). Without the Resurrection, the Cross of Jesus is just unrelieved tragedy. Without the Resurrection of Christ, the Church, too, is a vain and useless thing. Without the Resurrection of Jesus, death is still just a biological fact, no hope after death. But with the death and Resurrection of Jesus, death no longer holds dominion.

It is at the Cross and His empty tomb that one witnesses the final and decisive act of God in rescuing men and women from the dominion of darkness and transferring them into the kingdom of His dear Son (**Colossians 1:13-14**). These two events enabled the early Christians to face tragedy with perseverance. Remember, the early church did not revere the memory of a dead Jew, but they celebrated victory of sin and death through His death and Resurrection. The following words of Paul should be the desire of every believer: “To know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, some how, to attain to the resurrection from the dead” (**Philippians 3:10-11**).

What does the Cross and the Resurrection of Christ mean to you? What does the church mean to you? Is the Church central to you in your life of devotion? One should commit to memory what Paul says to the Ephesian elders: “Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood” (**Acts 20:28**). What do the ensuing words of the author of the Book of Hebrews mean to you: “How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace” (**Hebrews 10:29**).

Are we really serious about redemption? Are we, in actuality, sincere about commitment to Jesus? How do you feel about Sunday attendance? Do you frequently neglect to assemble with the saints to celebrate the death and Resurrection of Jesus? Do you stay away from the assembly of God’s people in order to just have a good time on Sundays? What do the following words mean to you: “Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching” (**10:25**). The “Day approaching” depicted the destruction of Jerusalem. Nevertheless, Christians ought not to forsake the assembling of themselves with God’s people. Is Jesus our model in assembling with God’s people? Listen to Luke as he tells about Jesus and the Sabbath day: “He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his

custom” ([Luke 4:16](#)).

Bear in mind, the church is still the most important single phenomenon in God’s scheme of redemption. The church is the means of continuing the story of redemption (see [2 Corinthians 4:1-7](#); [5:17—6:2](#)). The church stretches across two thousand years. The church has been able to subdue kingdoms and to work righteousness in the lives of men and women. It has been able to quench the fires of Europe’s savage and licentious paganism through the proclamation of God’s Good News of salvation by grace through faith in His Son Jesus the Messiah. Yet, the church is made up of fallible human beings. In spite of all its tragic inconsistencies, division and degradation, one still finds life in God through Jesus Christ. The church must continue its fight against the ungodliness of men and women. Who is the godless person? One who is godless is anyone who is content to live without God in his or her life. Unless the world becomes more Christian than it is, it will become more and more ungodly than it has been before. Take away Christianity and civilization perishes. The church is a fellowship of individuals. In Christ, one escapes from the jungle of individualism. The community of Christ can only be a worshipping community—a praying and working community, which is to say, a city of God.

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<sup>d</sup>Or *nor heavenly rulers*